





Child and Adolescent Suicide



Untreated depression can lead some youth to take their own lives.
Attempted suicides are more common.

Suicide...

-  **3rd leading cause of death for 15-24 year olds**
-  **6th leading cause of death for 5-14 year olds**

Warning Signs of Suicide: Four out of five teens who attempt suicide give clear warnings.

- **Suicide threats~either direct or indirect**
- **Verbal hints such as “I won’t be around much longer” or “It’s hopeless.”**
- **Putting affairs in order (e.g. giving or throwing away favorite possessions)**
- **Sudden cheerfulness after a period of depression**
- **Obsession with death (e.g. poems, essays and drawings that refer to death)**
- **Hallucinations, irrational or bizarre thoughts and behavior**
- **Overwhelming sense of guilt, shame or rejection**
- **Severe drop in school performance**
- **Dramatic change in personality or appearance**
- **Changed eating or sleeping patterns**

What to do if parents and other adults think a child/teen is suicidal?

- **Offer help and listen.** Ask the child or teen if s/he feels depressed or thinks about suicide or death. Let the child or teen know that you care and want to help. Speaking openly and honestly allows the child/teen to confide in you. Encourage depressed youth to talk about their feelings. Listen, don’t lecture.
- **Trust your instincts.** If you think the situation may be serious, seek immediate help. If necessary, break a confidence in order to save a life.
- **Pay attention to talk about suicide.** Ask direct questions and don’t be afraid of frank discussions. Alert key adults in the youth’s life~family, friends and teachers. Adults, inform the child’s parents or primary caregiver and recommend they seek professional help for their child/teen. Silence is deadly!
- **Seek professional help.** It is essential to seek expert advice from a mental health professional that has experience helping youth who are depressed and suicidal. If the child or teen is a student, find out if there are any available mental health professionals at the school and let the child know about them. Give the child/teen local resources, such as a crisis hotline or location of a mental health clinic.

**IF YOU OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW IS CONTEMPLATING SUICIDE, CALL
1-800-273-8255**

- **Covenant House Nine Line (24-hour teen crisis line) 1-800-999-9999**
- **www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org**
- **American Association of Suicidology: www.suicidology.org**
- **American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry: www.aacap.org or 202-966-7300**